

February 21, 2022

To the Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee

I am a pediatric emergency medicine physician who is writing to you in support of :  
HB. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING  
JUNE 30, 2023.

Since the COVID 19 pandemic, behavioral health patients have overwhelmed emergency departments, primarily the emergency departments in our two children's hospitals in the state (<https://ctmirror.org/2021/05/25/children-with-psychiatric-needs-are-overwhelming-hospital-emergency-departments-in-ct/>).

These children have significantly more severe mental illness than seen previously; more of these children have attempted suicide or have injured others during a behavioral outburst. In addition, many families can no longer care for such children in their homes, as they have not had access to reasonably timely and effective behavioral health care in their communities. Due to these factors, many more children require inpatient hospitalization and have longer stays, further exacerbating the volume of children in ED's waiting for an inpatient bed for stabilization.

HB 5037 will help address this dire situation in our Emergency Departments by funding DMHAS \$3 million in FY 23 and FY 24 to support 24/7 coverage in privately provided mobile crisis teams. HB 5037 will also provide \$1.6 million each year to help case management services for individuals awaiting treatment post-crisis.

Mobile crisis workers are incredibly resourceful and helpful. These workers can come to the home and help parents triage whether or not they need to take their child to the emergency department or not. Case management services post ED visit would also be vital to link children to the appropriate level of behavioral health treatment so they can be safely discharged from the Emergency Department.

The provisions in HB 5037 will go a long way to help alleviate the burden of children with unmet behavioral health needs in our Emergency Departments in Connecticut. I urge you to pass this bill on their behalf.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Bechtel MD  
New Haven CT